

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 5229

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, SHUM

SUBJECT: ALLEGED DETERIORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: FOUR TOP DEFENDERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHILE
CLAIM SITUATION HAS MARKEDLY DETERIORATED IN LAST MONTH
AND A HALF. END SUMMARY

2. DURING DINNER FOR VISITING DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY (IO)
ROBERT BLAKE AUGUST 27, HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION WAS DISCUSSED
FULLY AND FRANKLY WITH PDC IDEOLOGUE AND BANNED COMMENTATOR
ON RADIO BALMACEDA JAIME CASTILLO, COMMITTEE FOR PEACE EXECUTIVE
SECRETARY FR. FERNANDO SALAS, SJ LUTHERAN BISHOP HELMUT FRENZ,
AND PROMINENT DEFENSE LAWYER ALFREDO ETCHEBERRY. ALL AGREED
THAT HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HAS MARKEDLY DETERIORATED IN LAST
MONTH AND A HALF. SOME SPECIFICS:

(A) SALAS CLAIMED COMMITTEE FOR PEACE HAS RECEIVED AROUND 350
REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM FAMILIES OF DETAINEES DURING THIS
PERIOD, A SHARP INCREASE OVER PREVIOUS MONTHS' TOTALS.

(B) NUMBER OF PERSONS DETAINED FOR SECURITY REASONS HAS RISEN
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MARKEDLY. SALAS CLAIMED MINISTER OF INTERIOR BENAVIDES TOLD

HIM AUGUST 27 TOTAL NUMBER OF SECURITY DETAINEES IS NOW AROUND 8,000, UP FROM PREVIOUS FIGURE OF 6,000.

(C) TWO INTERROGATION/TORTURE CENTERS IN GREATER SANTIAGO, AIR FORCE WAR ACADEMY AND APARTMENT AT CALLE LONDRES 38, ARE "BUSIER THAN EVER."

(D) TWELVE PERSONS HAVE ALLEGEDLY BEEN SUMMARILY EXECUTED RECENTLY BY GOC SECURITY FORCES, SOME WITHIN AN HOUR OR TWO OF DETENTION.

(E) ACCORDING TO FRENZ, GOC IS ABOUT TO EXPEL A LUTHERAN PASTOR IN PUERTO MONTT AREA FOR "TRUMPED-UP" REASONS AND HAS TURNED A DEAF EAR TO HIS APPEALS.

3. ALL CHILEANS WERE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT FUTURE, WITH SALAS ADDING THAT PRESENT "POLICE STATE" SEEMS TO BE TURNING INTO A "TRUE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP."

4. MOST LINKED REPORTED CHANGE IN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION TO JULY 11 CABINET SHUFFLE AND ESPECIALLY TO REPLACEMENT OF GENERAL OSCAR BONILLA AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR BY GENERAL CESAR BENAVIDES. BEYOND THAT, RESPONDENTS WERE AT A LOSS TO EXPLAIN WHY "CRACKDOWN" WAS INSTITUTED, ALTHOUGH SOME SPECULATED THAT IT WAS MILITARY POWER PLAY TO GAIN TOTAL DOMINATION OF CHILE ONCE AND FOR ALL. THEY REJECTED PROPOSITION THAT INCREASED SECURITY MEASURES MIGHT BE TEMPORARY AND RELATED TO PROXIMITY OF SEPTEMBER 11 ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF COUP, BUT THEY DID ACKNOWLEDGE THIS COULD BE A "MINOR" FACTOR.

5. ACCORDING TO SALAS, MINISTER OF INTERIOR OFFICIAL TOLD HIM COMMUNIST PARTY (PCCH) MEMBERS ARE PARTICULAR OBJECT OF GOC SECURITY MEASURES, WITH ORDERS OUT TO ARREST "ALL" PCCH MEMBERS ON SIGHT. RATIONALE OFFERED IS THAT PCCH, ALTHOUGH NOT TERRORIST-INCLINED, REMAINS ONLY ORGANIZED LEFTIST FORCE NOT ALREADY DESTROYED BY GOC. SAME OFFICIAL ALLEGEDLY TOLD SALAS THAT "NINE" UNIFORMED MEMBERS OF ARMED SERVICES INCLUDING

CARABI NEROS HAVE BEEN KILLED LATELY BY "EXTREMISTS."

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6. THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT MASSIVE POLICE SWEEPS THROUGH SLUM AREAS (SANTIAGO 5125) ARE NOT CONNECTED YET WITH POLITICAL PERSECUTION, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS GROWING UNEASINESS THAT THEY WOULD BE.

7. THERE WAS ALSO GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT, ALTHOUGH "RESENTMENT" AMONG WORKERS AND SLUM DWELLERS IS INCREASING, THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT IT IS LIKELY TO EXPLODE INTO ACTIVE UNREST

OR OVERT ACTS IN NEAR FUTURE. BUT, AS ETCHEBERRY NOTED, "HOW LONG CAN ONE GOVERN BY MACHINE GUN ALONE?"

8. COMMENT: OUR FOUR INFORMANTS ARE MEN OF UNQUESTIONABLE INTEGRITY, AND ARE USUALLY WELL INFORMED, BUT THEY ARE ALSO STRONGLY BIASED IN THEIR OUTLOOK ON HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HERE. WHAT THEY SAY STANDS IN CONTRAST TO WHAT WE HAD BEEN OBTAINING FROM CONTACTS OF SIMILAR POLITICAL PERSUASION AS RECENTLY AS TWO OR THREE WEEKS AGO.

9. WE ARE QUITE PREPARED TO BELIEVE THAT NUMBER OF PERSONS DETAINED FOR SECURITY REASONS IS RISING AT THIS TIME. AS WE HAVE REPORTED, TENSION IS INCREASING WITH APPROACH OF SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARY DATES. MOREOVER, GOC IS REACTING TO SPECIFIC, ISOLATED INCIDENTS OF OR PLANS FOR VIOLENCE REPORTED THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS. IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO MAKE A FINAL JUDGMENT ON SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS UNTIL END OF SEPTEMBER OR AFTERWARD.

10. WE BELIEVE THAT IF NINE MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES HAD BEEN KILLED BY EXTREMISTS, ONE OR MORE OF OUR SOURCES WOULD HAVE KNOWN ABOUT IT VERY QUICKLY. SUMMARY EXECUTIONS OF CIVILIANS BY SECURITY FORCES MIGHT BE CONCEALED FOR SOMEWHAT LONGER PERIOD, BUT IF CONTINUED WOULD SURELY BECOME KNOWN IN RELATIVELY SHORT TIME. (WE HAVE JUST LEARNED WASHINGTON POST CORRESPONDENT NOVITSKI WILL BE FILING STORY CLAIMING TWO SUCH EXECUTIONS.)

11. IN SUM, WE THINK IT LIKELY THERE HAS BEEN A DETERIORATION IN SITUATION. WITHIN NEXT FEW WEEKS WE SHOULD HAVE A BETTER IDEA OF THE LONGER-TERM TREND.
POPPER

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